

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5118
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15383

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR MT LY
SUBJECT: MALTA'S LIBYAN OPTION

REF: STATE 204506

1. SUMMARY: GOI BELIEVES THAT MINTOFF WILL TRY TO MAINTAIN POSITION BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND ARAB CAMPS AND WILL THUS CONTINUE UP UNTIL LAST MOMENT TO TRY TO PLAY ONE SIDE OFF AGAINST THE OTHER IN EFFORT TO GET MAXIMUM IN POLITICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC BACKING FROM BOTH SIDES. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT USG SHOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY ROLE OF INTERESTED OBSERVER OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MINTOFF AND EUROPEANS BUT THAT WE SHOULD NOT TAKE LEAD IN PUSHING FOR COORDINATED MILITARY SUPPLY EFFORT. END SUMMARY.

2. OUR DISCUSSIONS OVER RECENT MONTHS WITH MFA OFFICIALS
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CIALS LEAD US TO CONCLUSION THAT ITALIANS STILL BELIEVE THAT MINTOFF'S GOAL IS TO MAINTAIN "NEUTRAL" POSITION BETWEEN EUROPEANS AND ARABS WHILE EXTRACTING MAXIMUM CONCESSIONS FROM BOTH SIDES. WHILE QADHAAFI'S RECENT VISIT TO MALTA CAUSED SOME JITTERS IN MFA AND MADE OFFICIALS WONDER FOR FIRST TIME IF MINTOFF WAS NOT ENTIRELY BLUFFING ABOUT EXTENT OF LIBYAN COMMITMENT TO

MALTA, EVENTS SINCE THEN HAVE CONFIRMED EARLIER ITALIAN VIEW THAT MINTOFF WANTS TO KEEP LINES OPEN TO EUROPEANS. GOI STILL EXPECTS THAT EUROPEAN FINANCIAL PACKAGE CAN BE WORKED OUT WHICH WILL IN THE END BE ACCEPTABLE TO MINTOFF AND THAT MINTOFF RECOGNIZES DOMESTIC POLITICAL RISKS FOR HIM INVOLVED IN MOVEMENT AWAY FROM WESTERN EUROPEANS IN DIRECTION OF ARABS.

3. AS TO PROMOTION OF COORDINATED EUROPEAN MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT USG SHOULD MAINTAIN STANCE OF INTERESTED AND CONCERNED OBSERVER OF MALTESE-EUROPEAN NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT WE SHOULD NOT TRY TO TAKE LEAD IN ENCOURAGING SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT, ESPECIALLY IF WE DO NOT PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN IT. ITALIANS MAY ALREADY BE SLIGHTLY MIFFED THAT WE HAVE SUGGESTED CHANGE IN LANGUAGE OF "THEIR" NEUTRALITY GUARANTEE. BY MAKING FURTHER SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WHAT OTHERS MIGHT DO, WE WOULD BE LIKELY TO LEAVE OURSELVES OPEN TO REACTION THAT WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO SUGGEST INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER COUNTRIES' RESOURCES WHERE WE WILL NOT INVOLVE OUR OWN. HOLMES

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